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Melvil Dewey

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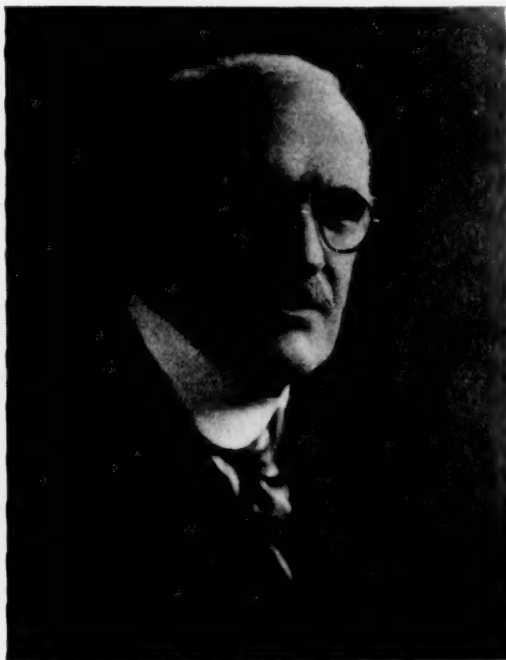
Melvil Dewey

MELVIL DEWEY was one of those beings who might rightly be called a human dynamo. He was scarcely out of his teens when he developed the schemes of the Decimal Classification for libraries known the world over by his name, and he continued in active work in the several causes which he made his own till he became an octogenarian, alas but a fortnight before his death. Throughout these sixty years of resolute activity he lived a purposeful, effective life, with abundance and variety of result such as few men have known.

Melvil Dewey was not Yankee born, as was perhaps naturally thought, but was born a New Yorker, and he combined the wide outlook of the Empire State with the shrewdness of circumscribed New England. His father was Joel Dewey and his mother's maiden name was Eliza Green. The hamlet of Adams Center in Jefferson County, ten miles from Watertown, where his father kept a country store, has perhaps its sole distinction in being the birthplace of Melvil Dewey, December 10, 1851. The month of his birth was also the month in which Louis Kossuth arrived in America, and how must the prophetic soul of the boy shuddered when he was old enough to realize that his christening name was Melvil Louis Kossuth Dewey. The boy was father of the man and must have been rather overpowering to the actual father. The store sold tobacco, but young Dewey, as a result of deep conviction, sold it all to the rival store and announced that the Dewey store would no longer trade in the weed. As a youngster he earned pennies by helping in farm work until he had enough dollars to buy an unabridged

dictionary, which he walked to Watertown to purchase. His impulse to serve human kind had led him toward the ministry, but at fifteen he began to see that education offered a still broader field. It was not until he was in his twentieth year that he was able to enter

college, in the class at Amherst which graduated in 1874. His interest in books at once brought him into touch with the library, then modestly housed in the wooden building which William I. Fletcher later made famous. In this he was first a student helper, then from 1874-75 assistant librarian, from 1875 to 1876 acting librarian, and from 1876-1877 again assistant librarian. Amherst gave him his M. A. in 1877 in regular course, but did not more fully recognize by honorary degree the son who through his library work carried the



Dewey at Seventy-three

name of his Alma Mater abroad as few if any have ever done, and it was left to Syracuse University and Alfred University to give him, both in 1902, the well-deserved honor of LL.D. which made him rightly Dr. Dewey.

It was in those early Amherst days that he projected the first of his three great contributions to modern library progress, each of them perhaps greater than the contributions of any other of his day and generation. These were the Decimal Classification, the development of the American Library Association and the initiative library school. One day in chapel, while the Prex was delivering platitudes, the youth's mind was more active, and in a more practical direction. He had been thinking a good deal of book classification. He had not been satisfied either with the fixed location of subjects on the shelves

or with the alphabetical arrangement of books, which later the State Librarian of Georgia boasted to library visitors was his brilliant invention when he first tackled the problems of the State Library to which as a Confederate war veteran he had been appointed. Suddenly it flashed upon the young student's mind that the decimal system could be utilized in the classification of books and that here was a solution of his vexing problem. The first edition of the Decimal Classification was published from Amherst in 1876 and thus the system was sometimes known as the Amherst classification. The application of the principle was entirely novel for it meant that to the right of the decimal point there could be infinite sub-division without rearrangements, no matter how large a library or how minute the classification. In this respect it was in sharp contrast with Charles A. Cutter's expansive classification which was for some time its rival, a classification not really expansive because it needed remaking from step to step, while the Decimal Classification held good throughout. Thus the Dewey classification, which would have been all the better could the duo-decimal system which he also favored have come into use, came to be the accepted method for most libraries, and it was to his regret that the Library of Congress worked out its separate notation and Dr. Billings devised still another classification for the New York Public Library, thus preventing the entire integrity of library methods in this field. It was an extraordinary achievement for one of his youth to plan out a scheme of knowledges which was all-comprehensive in its day and which, on the whole, has stood the test of time to remarkable extent. No prophet can foretell the future and in the sixty years succeeding science has developed and ramified beyond possible foresight in those days. It is always true of standardization that exceptions sometimes become as important as the rules, and this has been the basis of much of the criticism of the D. C. as obsolete and of various attempts to reshape the categories. But no college professor or faculty could really have done a finer piece of work than Dewey did in his time, and the thousands of libraries throughout the United States and elsewhere in the world which have adopted the system are his everlasting debtors.

Abroad his most active disciples have been La Fontaine and Otlet in Belgium, who established the Institut International de Bibliographie and set about working out the decimal classification in almost infinite detail of sub-division, to the point, for instance, of having

a minute sub-division for paper car-wheels. This extended Classification Decimale, spoken of as the C. D. instead of the D. C., already extends in its first volume to over 1500 closely printed pages, in comparison with the twelfth edition of the D. C. with its 1243 more open pages. No one who has not seen the extraordinary collection of *fiches* or cards housed in the Palais Mondial in Brussels, which represents the practical application of the C. D., can appreciate the extent of this colossal enterprise, now reaching toward fifteen million cards and requiring so much space and so much cost for upkeep as to make its future unfortunately an almost unsolvable problem.

From Amherst Dewey came to Boston where he made his headquarters for seven years, engaged in the three causes which were his life work until the development of the Lake Placid Clubs engrossed him. After the formation of the American Library Association and his election as secretary, he made headquarters for it in Boston, under Justin Winsor's presidency, and he also became secretary of the Spelling Reform organization and of the Metric Bureau, both of which profited from his organizing ability. When Mr. Carnegie became interested in simpler spelling, Dewey proved a chief agent under a Carnegie grant in carrying forward the plan, especially with reference to the ten words—as catalog for catalogue—which it was hoped might come into general use and make converts for the larger plan. Several of these came into general use, but the progress of the entire reform did not fulfill the hopes of Mr. Carnegie in his lifetime or of Dewey in his day. Nevertheless he loyally persisted not only in using simplified spelling in its entirety in all that he wrote, but in the relations of the Lake Placid Club where the casual and uninformed visitor was not a little perplexed to know what *yst te* at the head of the supper menu meant until these mystic words were transformed into common speech as iced tea. Naturally he was drawn into advocacy of the metric system, which has had perhaps more progress than simplified spelling and which is gradually being adopted by American engineers, though not yet fully by the U. S. Government in its mathematical relations. When these movements reach success, that success will largely be owing to the pioneer work of Melvil Dewey.

In Boston he made the acquaintance of Annie R. Godfrey, who became his wife in 1878. She was an ardent sympathizer in his

reforms and for some time spelled her name Ani Dui, and Dewey himself utilized the simplified form of Dui until it was reported that banks refused to recognize such signature as legal. That form appears on THE LIBRARY JOURNAL title-page in 1880, but was later dropped and Dui again became Dewey.

In Boston, then considering itself at least the literary hub of the universe, his first business venture was the Readers and Writers Economy Company to provide standardized material such as after the organization of the American Library Association was worked out so fully by its Cooperation Committee of which Charles A. Cutter was chairman. It is not true that the library card was an American invention, for Leyden University had a card catalog more than a century earlier, but the standard card, first in index size and later in what is now the standard size, with the hole punctured for the retaining rod, was an American development for which Cutter and Dewey should have full credit. This initial company was translated into the Library Bureau, which commercially had rather a checkered career in its early days. It had early expanded beyond its capital and Dewey and H. E. Davidson, who was associated with him in the enterprise, were given opportunity to purchase the stock at 40 cents on the dollar, as was done by Dewey, who continued the development until differing views and further financial difficulties compelled a reorganization and Davidson became the manager. The Library Bureau proved indeed a far-seeing venture for ultimately it was placed on a sound commercial basis, having now factories in many places here and abroad through which a usefully uniform outfit for libraries from cards to furniture is provided. It was finally absorbed, in 1926, into the Remington Rand Company, in com-

bination with the well-known typewriter and other office apparatus, and is one of the strong features of that organization, although, despite Mr. Rand's book, *Assuring Business Profits*, this has not proved a happy investment for its stockholders.

Frederick Leypoldt, with earlier experience in Philadelphia as publisher, importer and

bookseller, with a circulating library, had come to New York and in association with a young Yale graduate, Henry Holt, had formed the firm of Leypoldt & Holt. He had for bibliography the like passion to that of Dewey for library classification. He decided to devote himself to this field, and in 1872 started the *Weekly Trade Circular*, renamed the *Publishers' Weekly*, with which was later combined George W. Childs' *American Literary Gazette and Publishers' Cir-*



Amherst College Library—1874

cular which had been published since 1852 in Philadelphia. Leypoldt brought into contributing association with his enterprise R. R. Bowker, who, as literary editor of the *Evening Mail*, had made information as to authors and publishers a specialty of that daily and was later connected with the literary department of the *Tribune*. A department of library notes was made a feature of the *Publishers' Weekly*, and in its issue for May 20, 1876 announcement was made of the proposed development of this feature into a separate library periodical. The plan at once interested Dewey, who hastened to New York and stated to Leypoldt that he had already proposed to a Boston publisher a similar publication. The three men put their heads together in working out the plan and in connection with it, in the office in the old World Building at 37 Park Row, the suggestion was made that there should be a revival of a library association

which had been projected in 1853 but which was no sooner born than it died. Letters and telegrams were at once sent out to leading librarians from Boston to San Francisco asking their cooperation, which with scarcely more than a single exception was promptly promised, and thus *THE LIBRARY JOURNAL* and the American Library Association had beginning, the first number of *THE LIBRARY JOURNAL* being published in September 1876 and the organizing conference of the American Library Association being held at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in October. Dewey's enthusiasm for the proposed library periodical was so unbounded that Leyboldt was induced to make an extraordinary business arrangement by which Dewey, who as managing editor in Boston was to get together and prepare the material—Bowker in New York was to be general editor—was to have 20 per cent of the gross revenue both from subscriptions and advertisements, without reference to cost of production. Within four years the publisher's loss had exceeded \$5000 and exhausted his capital and threatened the suspension of the periodical. A compromise was effected, as a part of which Dewey received the back numbers of the periodical as well as part cash, and a new start was made, with Cutter as editor, Bowker having gone to London to start an English edition of *Harper's Magazine*.

Dewey naturally became the secretary of the American Library Association when formed and was for years its motive power, and to his initiative is to be attributed the permanent success of the national organization in contrast with the prompt demise of the 1853 project, which lacked the spirit and devotion of a Dewey to carry it through. Dewey remained as secretary for fourteen years, through the successive presidencies of Winsor, Poole, Cutter and Crunden, until in 1890 he was himself elected president in deserved recognition of his service and ability.

In 1883 Dewey was called to New York to become chief librarian and later Professor of Library Economy at Columbia College, then under the presidency of F. A. P. Barnard. A separate library building had been erected in the city block then occupied by Columbia College between Madison and Fourth Avenues and Forty-ninth and Fiftieth Streets, and here Dewey rearranged the library on the decimal classification and set himself to modernizing it throughout. Around the main hall there was a gallery in which desks were

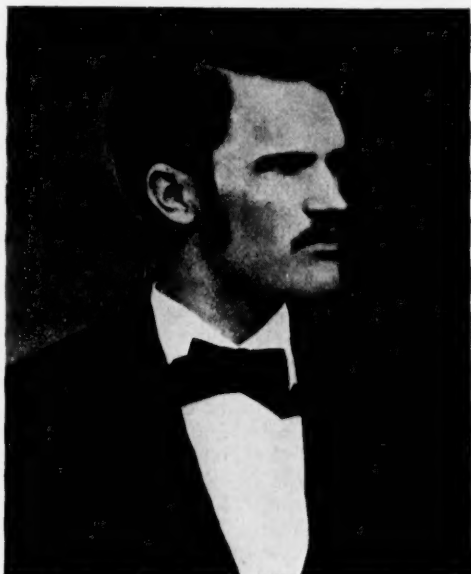
provided for readers, and Dewey's ingenuity took the turn of providing on the rail of each desk a system of signals by which the reader might communicate to attendants below his need of writing material, as a black signal for ink, a white signal for paper and the like. Dewey's enterprise and innovations had the cordial support of President Barnard, but were too much for the ultra-conservatism of Rev. Dr. Morgan Dix, Rector of Trinity, who was chairman of the Administrative Committee, the college being then a thoroughly Episcopal institution.

The idea of a library school had already formed itself in Dewey's mind and he broached the plan at the Buffalo conference of the A. L. A. in 1883. The idea was so novel that it produced not a little shock, particularly in the mind of William F. Poole, who queried where such a school would get students, what they would study and what would be the good of it all. He said he did not want to throw cold water on the plan, but a more sympathetic member retorted that he had already thrown a whole pool! The conference, after debate, voted cordial approval and Dewey proposed to the Columbia trustees that such a school should be made a feature of the college. The plan received the support of President Barnard in his annual report of 1884.

When it developed that women would be admitted, Dr. Dix undertook to put a quietus on the scheme and caused a resolution to be passed denying to women the use of any recitation rooms in the college. But Dewey was not thus to be checkmated and by connivance of the sympathetic superintendent of the college buildings he had a storage room cleared out, fitted with desks and chairs, and the first library school was actually started Jan. 1, 1887, for a three months' course, extended to a four months' course and later expanded into a full two years' course though the first class, in fact, graduated in 1888. He invited the metropolitan press to send representatives to the opening, and it was said that Dr. Dix first had knowledge of what was actually happening by the accounts in the next morning's papers. But the school proved a success and opposition diminished, although when in 1889 Dewey went to Albany the trustees were perhaps more than willing that he should take the library school with him, as he did.

The New York State Library, of which for many years Dr. H. A. Homes had been librarian, needed fresh blood and Dewey was the man for the work. The appointment was in

the hands of that unique body, the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York, a paper university not to be confounded with the actual University of the City of New York. The regents not only controlled the State Library but had supervisory jurisdiction over the educational organization of the state, including the granting of charters. Dewey became secretary of the Board of Regents and its executive officer and in that relation accomplished much useful work, including standardization and the correction of abuses in the medical schools granting degrees and thus making authorized practitioners. The Library School became a part of the State Library and so remained until 1926, when Columbia University welcomed it back as a part of the magnificent institution on Morningside Heights. The State Library took on new vigor, extending its functions and influence, perhaps not altogether to the satisfaction of the more conservative trustees.



Dewey at Twenty-three

Dewey had been afflicted with hay fever and in seeking relief he visited the Adirondacks and conceived the idea of starting at Lake Placid an establishment which would welcome not only sufferers from that tribulation but other visitors, especially librarians, on moderate lines and at reasonable expenditure. But moderation was not a part of Dewey's nature and presently the enlarging scheme, which became the Lake Placid Club, was worked up in his fertile mind. The enterprise was organized as a club instead of a hotel business and thus Dewey was enabled to insist on applying selective principles to would-be guests. This provoked ire in certain quarters and Dr. Leipziger took the battle, in behalf of his race, to Albany and fostered opposition to the state librarian on the ground that he was diverting his employment into other than state work. The Lake Placid Club had been started in 1895, but Dewey held the state position until 1906, when he retired to devote himself

chiefly to the further development of the Club. Thence the work at Placid more and more engrossed him and he was less frequently seen at the national conference, but he never lost his interest in and helpfulness for library work. He was present at the Saratoga meeting in 1918, seemingly rather enfeebled in health, but thereafter he took a new lease of life and the old vigor returned.

Dewey's fertile mind had also planned a library organization, as the A. L. A. grew into membership of thousands, which would hold together the elder leaders and those of new promise in a more intimate association that should give opportunity for discussion of topics less interesting to the larger body. In 1904 there was a council meeting at Lake Placid at which Dewey broached this plan and proposed the organization of the American Library Institute. It met with approval, though not without some protest

on the part of two or three members who thought it might either develop into a rival organization or else add to the diversion of time from regular library work. The Institute was really organized on the boat in the post-conference excursion to Alaska in 1905, succeeding the Portland conference, with Dewey as president.

The New York Library Club, the first of local library organizations, was another emanation from Dewey's fertile brain and was organized in June 1885, with Bowker as first president. At the twenty-fifth anniversary dinner he again presided, when the chief speaker was President Finley of the College of the City of New York, later Dewey's successor as executive of the Board of Regents, who as associate editor of the *New York Times* wrote the characteristic editorial in memory of Dewey which appeared in that daily on December 28 and is reprinted on another page.

The New York State Library Association followed in 1890, with Dewey as first presi-

dent, and from it developed "Library Week," which was in its early days regularly held at Lake Placid and after some wanderings on the part of the Association seems to have returned to a fixed location at Lake Placid.

The Lake Placid Club had more and more engrossed Dewey's interest and energy and grew with the years. The first purchase was a small residence called Bonnie Blink on the shore of Mirror Lake, around which was built the first clubhouse known as Lakeside. From that small beginning the Club has grown and grown and grown until today the property includes 10,600 acres, a score of important buildings, and altogether no less than 412 roofs, counting the farmhouses and barns on the farms which have one by one been added to the property. On the educational side there has been developed the Lake Placid Club Education Foundation, with a distinguished body of trustees, which has been endowed with a considerable block of club stock by Mr. and Mrs. Dewey and which later, it is planned, shall become the owner of Lake Placid Club South. In connection with the educational work, there has been established here the Northwood School, where already fourscore boys are having advantages of the most modern education. Another feature has been the Musical Festival which, beginning with a spring gathering of children and an

autumn assemblage of musical grown-ups, has made Lake Placid musically famous. From it went out a musical missionary who organized music courses in other parts of the state and was later commissioned through a grant by the Rockefeller Foundation to take the work into other states, beginning with North Carolina. Finally, the current year is to witness the grand climax in the development of winter sports through the Olympic winter games at Lake Placid, for which Godfrey Dewey is committee chairman.

Annie Godfrey Dewey died in 1922, leaving one son Godfrey, who completed his education and obtained his doctorate at Harvard. Some years earlier Mrs. Emily McKay Beal had visited the Club as a member of an economic conference, had become interested in its work and had proved an efficient and sympathetic participant in its development. In 1924 she became Mrs. Dewey and throughout the succeeding seven years of happy association the two have done effective teamwork in all the activities of which the Club has been the center.

Dewey had been told by his physicians that to prolong his life and his work he must not be exposed to the rigors of the northern climate during the winter and that started him on a quest in Florida for an attractive site on which Lake Placid Club South might be established. Dewey found such a place in central Florida, on what in that state is high ground,



Lake Placid Club Across Mirror Lake



Lake Placid South

where a land company owned thousands upon thousands of acres, including many small lakes. Dewey's energy and eloquence enabled the land company to see that the development he had in mind would be a great asset for their landed property and they conveyed to him 3,000 acres, including seven lakes, one of which was renamed Lake Placid. There was a railway station here for a small village, near which was a commonplace building intended for a hotel but never opened. Mrs. Dewey planned for this two circular rooms at either end, one as the lounge, the other as the dining room, and turned the commonplace building into a characteristic and inviting clubhouse. Dewey brought about a grand transformation in this neighborhood by inducing the legislature to rechristen their town Lake Placid, by arranging with the railroad company to enlarge its station facilities and name the station Lake Placid and by bringing to his southern enterprise the prestige and resources of the northern one. The hotel, the first "loj," has now been given up and "Littl Loj" has been built on the border of the new Lake Placid as the first of a projected series of buildings which

may still be worked out under the able generalship of Mrs. Dewey.

Here on the 10th of December, 1931, Dewey celebrated his eightieth birthday, as is elsewhere recorded, with greetings manifold from his northern friends, particularly his library associates, and from his southern neighbors of the Quest Society. Here sixteen days later death came to close this long and busy and effective life, and the brain which seemed workproof and timeproof gave way under cerebral hemorrhage. Cremation had always been one of the causes which he advocated, and his mortal body was reduced to ashes at Orlando and the urn brought to the chapel at Lake Placid North where it was placed in the crypt, with a simple burial service conducted by one of the chaplains of the Club. A wreath of laurel, the like of those sent not many weeks before for the burial of Thomas Alva Edison and of Daniel Chester French, was sent from the Bowker Woods at Stockbridge to honor the memory of Melvil Dewey, the Edison in the library field and the artist whose imagination working with Nature had created at Lake Placid an art work of magnificent proportions.



"M. D. of the D. C."

Some men can throw across a thwarting stream
A web of steel for humbler feet to tread.
 Some men can play. Some men hear words unsaid.
 Some men, through points whirled in a cunning
 scheme,
 Can light a city; or direct a beam
Of thought through infinite space. What some
 have read
 Can teach one how to better earn his bread;
 One how to kindle an ennobling dream.

Some men can certain living lines rehearse—
 And then make terrors live that shake the soul.
 Some men, at even, when our world is still,
Can watch the birth-throes of a universe.
 Some men can peer into a crystal bowl
 And dictate life or death there at their will.

Some men can take a patient mass of clay,
And mold it into beauty. Some can weave
 A gossamer of moonbeams. Some deceive
 The eye with flowers that will ne'er decay
 Because their brush has made them. *One rare day*
Some poet can sing a spell of magic words,
Pouring a rapture that out-lilts the birds.
 Some men can solace hearts too bitter to pray.

But what of him who grasps what all men do,
 And blends it into order? How of right
 Give praise to him who knows the final norm
 Of all mankind's endeavor? Who sees true
 In all disorder's darkness one clear light,
And gives man's chaos of thought a reasoned form?
 —FREMONT RIDER.

Nina E. Brown

MY RECOLLECTIONS of Mr. Dewey date back to his undergraduate days, when he lived on the same street on which I lived. Of course he did not remember me for college students pay no attention to little girls on the street.

When I went to Columbia to be a part of that second class, I was rejoiced at the absence of school atmosphere. It seemed to be a place where one might learn all one could with no pressure from above. I used to go to the Library at eight, the hour when the library opened. At nine the class work began with Miss Cutler teaching us cataloging. Later in the morning Mr. Dewey would come in, and until one, he would pour forth such a flood of information and history of library people and doings that I count myself fortunate in being one of those early ones to get the real inner history of the beginnings of the A. L. A. and of the personnel. I cannot believe that even the first class had as much of this as did the second, for the term was only three months, whereas our term was for the whole year.

One gift Mr. Dewey had, more than any one I ever knew. He roused the loyalty to the institution for which one worked. One might not like one's fellow worker, but that never stood in the way of doing the thing best for the library. I have been in more than one library, where the library might go to the dogs rather than cog the work with someone one did not like. Even one might not care for him, yet the work was done for the library's interest.

Frank P. Hill

THE MAN who led librarians out of the Wilderness and into the land flowing with milk and honey is no more. But his life history and works remain for our benefit. Dewey was a man of tremendous energy and enthusiasm. He had more schemes going, more irons in the fire at the same time than any man I ever knew. And how he could work—and get work out of others.

He was the planner and organizer: others carried out his plans.

He had a great faculty at gathering about him competent men and women.

At Amherst, with Walter Biscoe, he worked out the Dewey Decimal Classification.

In helping to organize the A. L. A. he had to meet and overcome the opposition of older and more experienced librarians.

The establishment of the Library Bureau was easily accomplished with the assistance of H. E. Davidson and W. E. Parker.

The Library Institute grew out of the feeling that there was a field which had not been cultivated, and which could be occupied by those a long time in the library profession who wanted to take up subjects not on A. L. A. programs.

Here, too, opposition was met from prominent librarians; but the idea appealed to so many that the project was successfully launched on the Alaska trip in 1905.

Simplified spelling is still used at the Lake Placid Club.

Launching the Lake Placid project Mr. Dewey had in mind to provide a Summer place where librarians and members of the teaching fraternity could enjoy a vacation at reasonable cost. It soon developed into a rich man's colony, but through its thirty-eight years of existence it has always offered low terms to librarians.

Dewey was a great believer in prohibition—of all sorts—resulting in rules that couldn't be

kept or enforced. One rule of the early days forbade smoking on the premises.

He was mortally afraid of fire, and had an excellent fire department. Every employee was instructed to yell "fire" whenever he saw smoke in unusual places. One day a boy saw smoke coming from a little boathouse on the lake shore, between Forest and Lakeside. He cried "fire" and started for Lakeside. Dewey met him, rushed back to the boathouse and there found four men, prominent in the educational world (and alive today) sitting on a wooden horse, smoking.

He said: "If men like you have to sneak away to smoke the rule will be cancelled."

From that day smoking has been permitted—by guests.

He gave in when it was to his advantage. Lake Placid South was the result of an illness suffered by Dr. Dewey some five years ago.

His Doctor told him he couldn't live North in the Winter so his active brain conceived a club, patterned after the Adirondack house in the South, which today has every appearance of success.

Dr. Dewey was a many-sided man, full of ideas and very forceful and convincing as a speaker.

St. Clair McKelway, a member of the Board of Regents of the State of New York, once wrote of Dewey's convincing manner in this way, which I quote from memory:

"He was the only man I ever knew who would at a meeting of the Regents, present a policy for consideration and have it adopted unanimously; and who, at a meeting of the same Regents a month later would ask to have the matter re-considered, submit the other side of the case, convince the Regents that the opposite policy was the only one to be adopted, and then and there have that opposite policy adopted unanimously. That Melvil Dewey succeeded in doing many times."

The above quotation is a good place to end this hastily written story of Melvil Dewey.

Fremont Rider

FOR YEARS before I met him for the first time Melvil Dewey had been to me literally one "admirer afar off," for I knew the tables of the "D.C." by heart before I was ten, and went to Albany mainly because there was "his" school! No wonder that I have always counted it one of my great privileges that for nearly two years I had the opportunity of

working in close association with him. As with all really great men, close association involved no disillusionment. Unfortunately I came to him just as he was leaving active library work; for the Lake Placid Club was then opening its second phase—its development as a winter resort—and Mr. Dewey's interests were for those two years much more of Club than of "D. C."

To me the preponderant impression "M. D." always gave was one of superabundant mental vitality. Always, like Kipling's Sir Anthony Gloster, he was thinking "a leetle ahead o' the next." Always he was going ahead so fast and so far that, mentally (and sometimes financially), the rest of us were a little breathless trying to keep up. But it was a tremendously invigorating experience, as tonic as Placid's own bracing winter air.

"M. D." was always so alive that it seems difficult to think of him as otherwise. And, as a matter of fact, he is preeminently one of those who will always live—in their works. In my little contribution to his 80th birthday volume I suggested that his passing would mark the end of an epoch in librarianship, the end of the Golden Age of the profession. I still think that it does.

Arthur E. Bostwick

AT A LIBRARY MEETING at the Lake Placid Club several years ago, I was one of a party of librarians invited to take lunch at Mr. Dewey's house. At the table Mr. Dewey, in the course of conversation, related to us in detail what had taken place many years before when the faculty of Columbia University attempted to discipline him for an alleged infraction of the rules.

After he had told the story he added that he had never related it in minute detail before. As we left the house, Mr. Bowker remarked that it was a pity that a dictagraph had not been concealed under the table because Mr. Dewey would be very unlikely to repeat what he had said either orally or in writing.

This regret I now fully share because, of course, it is impossible for me to recall what was said word for word and I find that my memory falls very short of dictagraph accuracy.

The infraction of discipline for which Mr. Dewey was tried was the admission of women to the newly established library school. The by-laws of Columbia College rigidly excluded women from the campus. At this time Pres. F. A. P. Barnard, who was friendly to Mr.

Dewey, was on leave of absence, and the acting president was Prof. Drisler, who was unfriendly. It was at Acting President Drisler's instance that Mr. Dewey was summoned to show reason why he should not be disciplined for violating the by-laws.

Sometime before this, Mr. Dewey had noticed among the archives of the institution a very old volume of regulations, which apparently, though still in force, had not been read or used for years. With his usual thoroughness, Mr. Dewey read this volume through with care, believing that knowledge of it might prove useful at some time or other. This knowledge, he told us, saved him on this occasion. The old regulations gave the president of the university power to depart from any one of them when, in his opinion, it was desirable so to do.

Now it so happened that, although Mr. Dewey had not secured formal action on the part of President Barnard, he had mentioned to him his intention of admitting women to the library school and President Barnard showed interest and brought up no objections. If President Barnard would state that this tacit approval was his official action, this, together with the old by-laws, would evidently absolve Mr. Dewey.

He first produced the old volume, which had probably never been seen by those present, and read the regulation on which he relied. Acting President Drisler at once made the statement that he had not countenanced any action of the kind to which objection was now being made. Whereupon Mr. Dewey quickly rejoined, "The by-laws says nothing about the acting president. It specifically mentions the president only." "Well," said Prof. Drisler, "what action has President Barnard taken in the matter?" "You had better ask him," responded Mr. Dewey. At this point the proceedings evidently had to be adjourned until communication could be held with the absent president. Mr. Dewey confessed that he was not at all certain of the outcome, because he had nothing in writing from President Barnard, and it was quite possible that the president would state that he remembered nothing about the incident in question, or possibly he might repudiate what Mr. Dewey had said altogether.

But President Barnard was a good sport. He answered in writing that he recollected perfectly that Mr. Dewey had told him of his intention of admitting women to the library school and that he as president had approved that action.

This put an end to the proceedings against Mr. Dewey.

Although Mr. Dewey said nothing of any influence that this matter may have had on his subsequent action, I think most of us felt that it was an indication of some degree of hostility or unfriendliness on the part of some of the more conservative members of the faculty against what they regarded as Mr. Dewey's radical innovations. At any rate, it was not long after this incident that Mr. Dewey accepted the position of state librarian and removed the library school to Albany.

Dorkas Fellows

THIS WORK, with which Dr. Dewey's name is more closely identified than with any other of his numerous enterprises, is too well known to LIBRARY JOURNAL readers to need any description of its purpose and plan. At this time a statement on historic lines seems to be most appropriate.

Devised early in 1873, when its author (then only 21 years old) was a junior at Amherst, it revolutionized library administration by establishing in place of the old "fixed location" on shelves the principal of relative location, on which are based all subsequent classification systems, whatever differences there may be in grouping and notation. Tested for three years before being printed it was published in 1876 in a little volume of forty-two pages, from which it has steadily developed until in 1927 Ed. 12 appeared with 1243 pages, and Ed. 13 (to be published this year) will be still further enlarged, nearly every one of the ten classes being somewhat affected. Expansions have been the work of many hands, including libraries, societies and individual specialists, and before publication they are regularly submitted for criticism to experts in classification and in subject matter.

In 1896, after careful consideration of all existing classification systems, Decimal Classification was selected by the newly organized Institut International de Bibliographie at Brussels as being best adapted to that organization's projected universal subject bibliography, designed to cover all subjects in all languages in all periods of the world's history. Determining factors were: (1) Decimal Classification was of topics, independent of language or of synonyms by which expressed; (2) its notation (consisting solely of arabic numerals, used all over the world) was the only international language; (3) its decimal principle allowed indefinite intercalation. About ten years ago it received—so far as such a thing exists—the official world-stamp

of approval, through its adoption by League of Nations Library. Statistics published by A. L. A. in 1927 showed that over 96 per cent of the 1019 public libraries reporting were using D. C. and over 89 per cent of the 249 college and university libraries, while a British questionnaire disclosed that 53 per cent of the public libraries in England and Wales were using this system. Its use extends over every continent and many countries: in North America not only United States but other countries, countries in South America, many in Europe, and still more distant in Asia, Hawaii, Philippines, Java, Australia and Africa, and the tables are known to have been translated either wholly or in part into French, German, Dutch, Norwegian, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, White Russian, Ruthenian, Bulgarian, Bohemian, Hungarian, Finnish, Chinese and Japanese. Also its use is not confined to libraries but extends to other organizations and to individuals in handling their business, professional and private collections of books, pamphlets, notes, correspondence, etc.

One of the most important recent developments is the inclusion on Library of Congress cards of D. C. numbers for books currently cataloged by L. C. The work of having cataloging and classification done at some central point instead of separately by each library was visioned by Dr. Dewey nearly sixty years ago, but in this matter, as in many others, he was far in advance of his time, and the seed planted in the distant past did not in this detail come to fruition till April, 1930 (less than two years ago) when under auspices of A. L. A. the work was inaugurated at Library of Congress, and since that time D. C. numbers have been assigned to over 53,000 titles and incalculable help has thereby been given to thousands of libraries.

Margaret Mann

MR. DEWEY, through his Decimal Classification, has given to librarians all over the world an aid which not only has solved the problem of book arrangement, but has helped to set standards for American methods, and has thereby placed this country in the first rank when the science of library work is under discussion.

The Decimal Classification was not limited to the allocation of books on the shelves; it also became a means by which catalogs could show the classified arrangement of subjects. The simple notation adopted for the classification scheme made it an easy matter to arrange

cards in the catalog according to decimal numbers. To further advance the making of this classed catalog, Mr. Dewey edited a code of catalog rules entitled: *Rules for Author and Classed Catalogs as Used in Columbia College Library . . . With Bibliography of Catalog Rules* by M. S. Cutler. Added to this code were rules for accessioning and shelf-listing and the volume commonly known as *Library School Rules* was used for years, not only as a text-book in library schools, but as a guide to catalogers everywhere.

Through this code one had directions for making the author and subject cards which make up the classed catalog, and it is today the only book which gives definite guidance for the compilation of a catalog of this type. Six editions were issued, the last in 1899. Unfortunately, the work is now out of print.

In 1898 he issued another text called *Simplified Library School Rules*, which was also used by students of library science.

Mr. Dewey was a student at Amherst College when he conceived the idea of building a classification scheme. The classification volume, first printed in 1876 with a total of forty-two pages in an edition of 1000 copies, has passed through twelve editions; the last printed in 1927 is a volume of 1243 pages.

The system is now in use in the majority of public libraries in the United States; in some of the large reference libraries, notably the John Crerar Library in Chicago, and in many university libraries. It has also been adopted in many foreign countries where translations have been made.

Mr. Dewey extended the usefulness of his classification by granting in 1905 to the Institut International de Bibliographie of Brussels the right to translate and expand his work. This French edition soon found friends in many parts of Europe. In Belgium, France, Holland, Switzerland and England its adoption has been very generally accepted by government and specialized libraries, particularly in the field of science. It is also in use in Soviet Russia, certain parts of China, and other countries.

So useful has this translation become that a new edition was published in 1929 by the Institut with the cooperation of the Nederlandsch Instituut voor Documentatie (La Haye). This edition, in three volumes, commonly known as the *Brussels Classification*, furnishes a valuable guide for those libraries which find it necessary to expand the English edition. The tables cover 1532 double column pages, in comparison with 1243 single column pages of the latest edition of the American edition.

What of the future of this tool which is so essential to hundreds of libraries? Mr. Dewey had this in mind when in 1923 he gave all copyrights and control of all editions to the Lake Placid Club Educational Foundation. A committee of this body, working in consultation with A. L. A. committees and the Institut International de Bibliographie, holds the responsibility of perpetuating the work which has been in progress during the past fifty-six years.

It is the sincere wish of all librarians using his classification that the contributions so generously made by Mr. Dewey during his life time may continue to grow and maintain the progressive spirit which he always exercised.

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AN APPROPRIATE epitaph for the late Melvil Dewey would be the above notation used in his library decimal classification system to identify his book. It would suggest the outstanding contribution of his eager and wide-ranging mind. His system, which has come into almost universal use, is capacious enough to make a place for all the volumes that have been written and printed, and flexible enough to admit hereafter all the books of whose making there is no end. Millions upon millions bear his decimal brand, and he will no doubt share, both in public and private libraries, the immortality of works in prose or verse whose place on the shelves he has permanently decreed.

If the activities of this world-known librarian were all recorded it would be puzzling to know where in his scheme to list them. He deserves a place in Philology, though he would not be comfortable there unless it began with an "F," since one of his persistent interests was reformed spelling. So aggressively loyal was he to the "queer-looking" spelling that he invited the sneers of many who clung to the old spellings as to friends of their childhood. He himself must have suffered pain as a lover of words in seeing their mutilated faces, but he continued valiantly to advocate the reform. He is also entitled to be remembered under 640 (and especially 647.94) for his demonstration of efficiency in the management of a guest hotel or club. Again, his promotion of outdoor sports, and especially Winter sports in the Adirondacks, would justify his being honorably mentioned under 796.9.

Still other categories have a right to claim him, especially professional education in this State. He was one of the pioneers in bringing about better preparation and compulsory registration for certain professions, notably that of medicine. But when an adequate biography is written it will give him a permanent place in 920.2—the place reserved for the biographies of librarians. Every library card catalog is a monument to him. The late J. C. Dana of the Newark Library attributed to him the "art of classifying" which, with the aid of librarians, made the library "helpful to a thousand ends and tractable to the humblest worker." Dewey's part in establishing schools for training librarians and in organizing the American Library Association will keep him in the lasting gratitude of librarians.

—ED.—*New York Times*, Dec. 28, 1931.

Birthday Celebration

THERE WAS celebration in the north and in the south Thursday, December 10 to mark the 80th birthday of Dr. Melvil Dewey, founder of Lake Placid Club in the Adirondacks and of Lake Placid Club in Florida. Meanwhile, from all over the country, messages of congratulation poured in from Dr. Dewey's many friends and from those who have been his fellow workers during his extremely active life. Special recognition came from his large group of library friends honoring the originator of the Dewey Decimal Classification for libraries which is used all over the world, and paying homage to the founder of New York State Library School, the former secretary and executive officer of the University of the State of New York, one of the three founders and first managing editor of *THE LIBRARY JOURNAL*, and editor of *Library Notes*.

No one among his thousands of associates has failed to admire the indomitable courage, energy and foresight which have enabled Dr. Dewey to forge ahead where lesser men would have failed miserably, and to create institutions, organizations, and whole new ways of thought which will stand as enduring monuments to his memory, long after his contemporaries have faded from mind.

Dr. Dewey was himself present at the celebration at Lake Placid Club in Florida, which has become his winter residence. There, at the beautiful new group of club buildings overlooking the clear waters of Lake Placid.

from an estate which borders on seven freshwater lakes, a feature of the festivities was the planting of a large palm tree bearing a bronze marker, the gift of a group of officers, staff and employees of Lake Placid Club in the Adirondacks.

At Placid north, the chimes in Forest towers were rung at 6 o'clock. A huge birthday cake with eighty lighted candles was borne into Forest dining room at 7 o'clock while Dr. Dewey's favorite compositions were played on the organ, and everyone stood in tribute to the absent founder and honorary president of the Club.

The day's climax came as Dr. Dewey was enjoying a birthday dinner, when the Quest Society of Florida surprised him with an informal reception which had been arranged by connivance without his knowledge.

Scores of wellwishers were present in person for the informal celebration. William F. Yust, former librarian of the Rochester, N. Y., Public Library, now librarian at Rollins College, Winter Park, Florida, on behalf of the Alumni Association of the New York State Library School which Dr. Dewey founded, presented nearly 300 letters of congratulation from alumni of the school and other librarians now scattered through forty states and ten foreign countries, including the most notable figures of the library world. They were handsomely bound in morocco, handtooled in gold, with silk lining and fly pages. C. E. Crossland, superintendent of schools, Lake Wales, Florida, presented another collection of letters sent to the Quest Society from more than 100 notable figures from more than thirty states. Dr. Thomas G. Lee, Babson Park, Florida, president of the Quest Society, made an address extolling the story of Dr. Dewey's work and accomplishments, and an address by Florida's state librarian was read in the latter's absence. Dr. Dewey made a brief response of appreciation in a happy reminiscent vein, denying any great achievement and claiming only the rôle of pioneer.

Letters From the Presentation Volume

MY DEAR MELVIL DEWEY:

I do not myself rejoice in Anniversaries, nor in disclosure of them. But if you do I would not be missing in the general acclaim of your eightieth.

What surprises me is that the occasion finds us so nearly contemporary: with only a decade between us; for your activities were conspicuous long before mine had any significance.

What is no surprise is that, though in direction and emphasis our enthusiasms have varied, they have not failed of mutual respect, and where not cooperative have been at least complementary. For such service as they have rendered to libraries and to the profession our satisfaction can be mutual. And on this occasion I can especially rejoice that from your present pinnacle you can survey so long a retrospect of accomplishment, such a profusion of influence exerted, so many specific efforts come to fruition.

May there be fruition also for others still pending, and many a year of keen enjoyment before you pass to the land of completely simplified spelling.

Cordially yours,

HERBERT PUTNAM

THE ASSOCIATED alumni of the New York State Library School, through affirmative action by their Board of Directors, are pleased to sponsor the present sheaf of letters in recognition of your eightieth birthday and in honor and praise of a life work exceptionally inspiring in its variety, influence, significance and usefulness.

For a quarter-century I have had unusual opportunity to observe the amazing range and carrying power of those manifold library and educational activities initiated by you from forty-five to sixty years ago, close connection with which you surrendered in 1906.

It is my conviction that among them all, when measured in terms of influence, example and enduring accomplishment, first place must be accorded to that Library School which at Columbia and Albany for near half a century has furnished so notable a body of trained workers and library leaders, whose work has so splendidly exemplified wholesome standards and ideals in the formative days of a new profession.

It is therefore those of this group, who knew you at Albany and Columbia, that join with friends and associates in other times and projects in these anniversary messages. May you have many more years of health and happiness.

J. I. WYER

President

New York State Library School Association

MY DEAR MR. DEWEY:

It was one of the happiest and most fortunate days of my life when I first met you in the old library building of Columbia University, on 49th street, in 1885. Since then much water has run under the mill but from that date and to that meeting I owe most of the success that it has been my good fortune to acquire.

It gives me utmost pleasure to extend to you my heartiest congratulations on having safely passed through your seventh decade and to wish you still more years of happiness and usefulness.

Yours very sincerely,
GEORGE WATSON COLE

MY DEAR DEWEY:

I remember—it was in the year of the Kaaterskill meeting of the A. L. A., whenever that was—when I was your guest at Lake Placid (as wonderful a creative work in its way as the Decimal Classification), you told a gathering of librarians that you had selected Lake Placid as the one place in the United States where the mind would function at its best, and people live the longest. I was, I confess, sceptical at the time, but so far as your own person is concerned you have gone a long way towards vindicating your faith. To be eighty years of age and to be as alert as you are is no mean achievement. I trust you will keep it up, and reach at least one hundred, which is—as all the world knows—the number of divisions in the Decimal scheme. On behalf not only of myself but of the legion of your followers and admirers in this country I wish you all possible health and happiness, and a tranquility of spirit as bright and beautiful as the surface of that liquid mirror by which your days are passed.

Yours very sincerely,
L. STANLEY JAST

Reference Library
Piccadilly
Manchester

MY DEAR AND BEST FRIEND:

Twenty-six years passed since a lucky chance placed at our disposal a copy of your splendid classification system whose conception, as simple as practical, opened suddenly to us, not as librarians but as bibliographers, a road towards the aim we had in mind, the building of a universal catalog of the whole bulk of ideas men had, since centuries, tried to perpetuate in writing.

It was the fifth edition of the Decimal Classification, the now famous D. C. contrived early in 1873, published in 1876! The bibliographical needs required an infinitely expansible classifying system. The D. C. offered the ideal solution and events have substantiated your enthusiastic adherence to your ingenious scheme. From about 8000 items in 1894 the D. C. has grown to include in the C. D. 72,000 items in 1931, with possibilities of unlimited combinations of numbers overreaching many hundreds of millions! And D. C. and C. D. are conquering the world. You have to be proud of such a triumphal performance!

It was my fortunate privilege to meet you first at Saint Louis in 1904, and again at the Lake Placid Club during wartime and six years ago at Riversea. For my wife and myself those meetings were among the most charming and lovely occurrences of our lives. Too short, alas, and too rare! We are happy of the occasion your eightieth birthday offers us to recollect those remembrances as a most friendly token of our everlasting sympathy.

May we express to you, with our warm-hearted congratulations and wishes, the hope that, somewhere in the wide world, we will soon have the opportunity of shaking again hands with you very affectionately.

H. LaFontaine

Secretary General of the International
Institute of Bibliography
First Vice-President of the Senate of
Belgium

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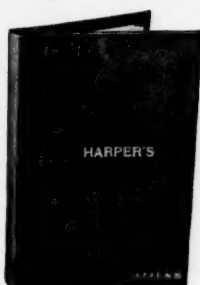


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